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Washington Wonderland

Cuban Refugee Warns It 'Can Happen Here'

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WASHINGTON, Oct. 2 — A former Havana busi-

nessman who managed the Cuban Electric Power Com-
pany is currently lecturing throughout the hemisphere
on the lesson we can learn from his unhappy homeland.

This eye-opening address effec-
tively refutes the long-held theory
that communism makes real head-
way only in city slums and under-
privileged areas of the world.

Serafin G. Menocal, a graduate
electrical engineer and former
president of Cuba's National
Council of Boy Scouts, says that
the laboring class and farm work-
ers were actually Fidel Castro's
greatest stumbling block in his
campaign to subvert Cuba.

THE EASIEST prey, he de-
clares, were students, politicians,
churchmen, and "businessmen
who generally remained aloof
from politics."

As a Rotarian and Lion's Club
president in Cuba Mr. Menocal
was in a position to know. With
an engineer's precision he care-
fully documents the steps by
which Castro took over his native
land, and warns that unless others
profit by those mistakes, it can
happen here and in South Amer-
ica.

To prove his point that commu-
nism does not necessarily feed on
poverty and illiteracy, he makes
these interesting points about pre-
Castro Cuba: Among Latin Amer-
ican countries Cuba ranked first
per capita in TV broadcasting sta-
tions and receivers, motion picture
attendance, and percentage of na-
tional income invested in educa-
tion.

IT RANKED second in value of
imports, exports, and radio re-
ceivers; third in income, number
of newspapers and magazines,
telephones, automobiles and elec-
tric power consumption per cap-
ita.

One of every five Cubans had a
radio; one in 20 a TV set, and one
in 27 an automobile. According to
a U. S. government report Cubans
were "among the better fed peo-
ple of the world," before Castro.

Cuba had the lowest mortality
rate in the Western Hemisphere.
Its industrial workers were pro-
tected by strong unions, and its
farm workers by legislation which
amounted to a profit-sharing ar-
rangement. The pre-Communist
island had an extensive public
school system free from discrim-
ination. It was cheaper and easier
to get a college education in Cuba
than the U. S.

"IT WAS not the illiterate or
the poor who were responsible for
the take-over by Castro," Menocal
says, but those members of the
middle and wealthy classes who
were "too absorbed in their own
pursuits" and liked the sound of
Castro's promises.

Menocal, like many other edu-
cated Cubans, hated dictator Ba-
tista and wanted to depose him.
They yearned for restoration of
their constitution, honest elections
and a government free from corrup-

Then came Fidel Castro, riding
the crest of Batista's unpopularity
and promising everything to
everybody. For a time he fooled
many, including influential seg-
ments of the American press and
our Central Intelligence agency.

Shortly after the Castro coup
this correspondent, while inter-
viewing CIA Director Allen Dul-
les, was ~~happily~~ told: "Castro is
not a Communist."

ON THE basis of information
secured from a non-governmental
source I nevertheless wrote that
he was, and cited evidence of
Castro's intimacy with the then-
little-known Red, "Che" Guevara.
A friend told me that at a top-
level staff meeting at CIA re-
cently my headlined article was
produced, and an official com-
mented: "I wish we'd said that."

Approximately a third of a mil-
lion Cubans have fled their island,
leaving behind possessions, homes
and life-savings. Menocal is one
of those who lost everything, but
he is now vice president of Amer-
ican Foreign Power Co., the Latin
subsidiary of Electric Bond and
Share Co. Let us hope that he can
awaken other businessmen of the
hemisphere to the importance of
keeping a watchful eye on their
own governments.

Perhaps in Central and South
America his appeal, based on per-
sonal experience, will carry more
impact than any amount of chid-
ing by our State Department. And
let's not lull ourselves into think-
ing that "it can't happen here,"
too.

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